

REMARKS

Applicants have carefully considered the Office Action dated April 9, 2004 regarding the above-identified application, and the claim amendments above together with the remarks that follow are presented in a bona fide effort to respond thereto and address all issues raised in that Action.

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 15, 16 and 21 would be allowable if recast in independent form. New claim 22 substantially corresponds to claim 15 recast in independent form. Claim 23, which corresponds to previous claim 16, depends from new claim 21. New claim 24 substantially corresponds to claim 21 recast in independent form. A number of minor changes have been made in the new claims, for clarity and to delete reference numerals. Such amendments are intended to be non-substantive in nature and should not be viewed as a narrowing of claim scope or a surrender of claimed subject matter. New claims 22-24 should be in condition for allowance, per the Examiner's indication of potential allowability of original claims 15, 16 and 21.

Claims 1-21 have been cancelled, rendering all issues raised in the Action moot, including the rejections of claims 1-14 and 17-20. Upon entry of the above claim amendments, claims 22-24 remain active in this application, all of which should be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, this case should now be ready to pass to issue; and Applicants respectfully request a prompt favorable reconsideration of this matter.

It is believed that this response addresses all issues raised in the April 9, 2004 Office Action. However, if any further issue should arise that may be addressed in an interview or obviated by an Examiner's amendment, it is requested that the Examiner telephone Applicants' representative at the number shown below.

09/632,164

To the extent necessary, if any, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

MCDERMOTT WILL & EMERY LLP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith E. George", written in a cursive style.

Keith E. George
Registration No. 34,111

600 13th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005-3096
(202) 756-8000 KEG:apr
Facsimile: (202) 756-8087
Date: July 9, 2004